

# 2025 ECONOMIC REPORT

## SOUTHWEST REGION



The Southwest Region is comprised of seven counties in the southwest corner of Missouri. This region is home to several cities including Joplin, Neosho, and Monett.

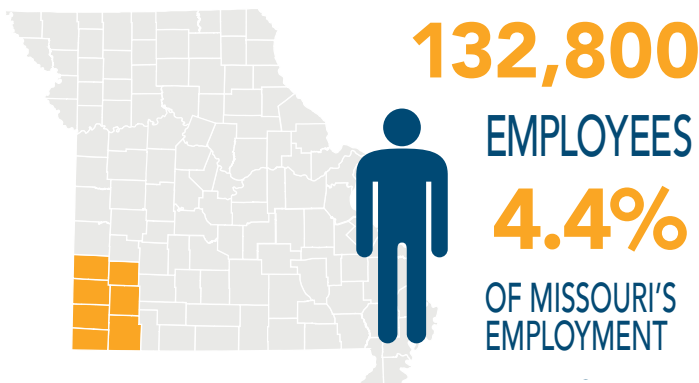
The Southwest Region workforce had more than 132,800 employees in 2024, making up 4.4 percent of Missouri's employment. In 2024, 46.5 percent of the workforce was female and 53.5 percent was male, while the Missouri average was 50.1 percent female and 49.9 percent male workers in the workforce. The regional average unemployment rate in 2024 was 3.8 percent, compared to 3.7 percent for Missouri and 4.0 percent for the nation.

The workforce is getting older in the Southwest Region, a trend continuing throughout Missouri and the U.S. In 2024, 23.8 percent of the workforce was age 55 or older, up from 20 percent a decade earlier. It was 23.5 percent for Missouri and 24.1 percent for the nation.

For the region, 10.5 percent of the workforce was non-white and 9.2 percent was Hispanic or Latino. This compares to the state averages of 18.1 percent non-white and 5.1 percent Hispanic or Latino.

In the Southwest Region, 8.5 percent of the population (ages 18 to 64) speaks a language other than English at home. By comparison, Missouri was at 7.4 percent and the U.S. was at 23.8 percent.

The Southwest Region has a slightly higher percentage of the population with a disability compared to the state and the nation. For the Southwest Region, 14.3 percent of the population had a disability compared to 12.6 percent in Missouri and 10.7 percent in the U.S.



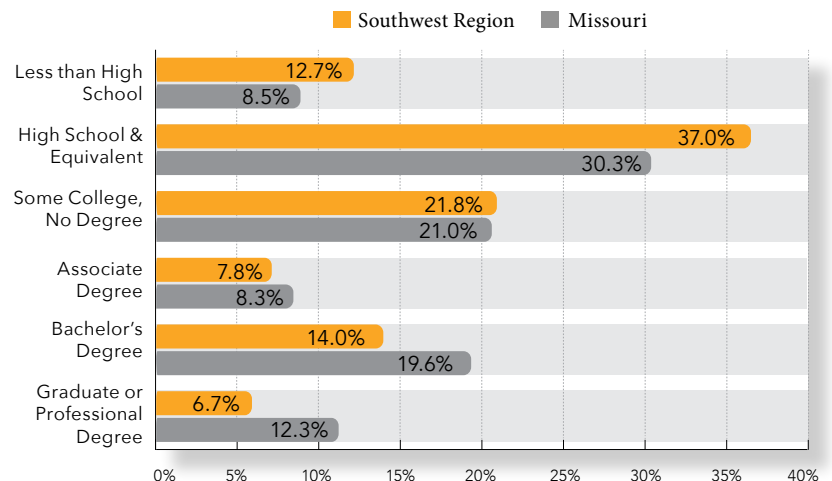
### Workforce Demographics

|                                                            | Southwest Region | Missouri  | United States |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Average Monthly Employment in 2024                         | 132,852          | 3,016,886 | 161,346,000   |
| Average Unemployment Rate in 2024                          | 3.8%             | 3.7%      | 4.0%          |
| Male                                                       | 53.5%            | 49.9%     | 51.2%         |
| Female                                                     | 46.5%            | 50.1%     | 48.8%         |
| Non-White                                                  | 10.5%            | 18.1%     | 24.9%         |
| Hispanic or Latino                                         | 9.2%             | 5.1%      | 18.3%         |
| Ages 55 and Older                                          | 23.8%            | 23.5%     | 24.1%         |
| With Disabilities (Ages 18-64)                             | 14.3%            | 12.6%     | 10.7%         |
| Below Poverty Levels (Ages 18-64)                          | 15.9%            | 12.1%     | 11.6%         |
| Language other than English (Ages 18-64)                   | 8.5%             | 7.4%      | 23.8%         |
| Education of Associate Degree or Higher (25 years & Older) | 28.5%            | 40.2%     | 43.8%         |
| Veterans (Age 18-64)                                       | 5.2%             | 4.7%      | 4.2%          |

SOURCE: QWI 2024 Q1; PRIVATE OWNERSHIP. CENSUS 2023 ACS 5 YEARS DATA, LAUS 2024 DATA

Educational attainment rates for the Southwest Region are lower than those of the state for bachelor's or advanced degrees. Twenty-eight percent of the region's population age 25 and older, has an associate, bachelor's, or advanced degree compared to 40.2 percent for the state, and 43.8 percent for the nation. About 12.7 percent of the region's population age 25 and older has less than high school education.

### Educational Attainment



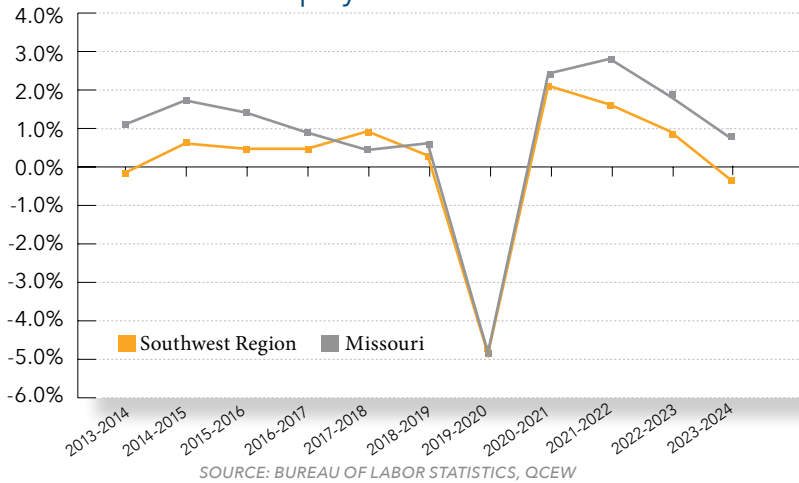
SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, ACS 2023 5 YEAR ESTIMATES

# SOUTHWEST REGION

## INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

The Southwest Region averaged over 113,500 jobs in 2024. Employment in the region declined by 0.3 percent from 2023. Missouri employment increased by 0.8 percent in 2024. From 2020 to 2024, the Southwest Region averaged 0.9 percent compound annual growth for an overall increase of 4.7 percent. During that same period (2020-2024) Missouri's compound annual employment gain was 1.6 percent for an overall gain of 8.3 percent.

Southwest Employment Annual Growth Rate



*Manufacturing* was the largest employing industry in the region in 2024 with almost 22,400 jobs. *Health Care and Social Assistance* was the second largest industry in the region with over 16,300 jobs. *Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services* was the fastest growing industry from 2020 to 2024, increasing by a compound annualized growth rate of 8.3 percent. *Transportation and Warehousing* gained 2,118 jobs at a compound annual growth rate of 6.5 percent from 2020 to 2024.

*Manufacturing* declined by 1,503 in employment from 2020 to 2024. Other industry sectors in the Southwest Region that decreased in employment between 2020 and 2024 were *Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services*; *Management of Companies and Enterprises*; *Health Care and Social Assistance*; *Finance and Insurance*; and *Real Estate and Rental and Leasing*.

Southwest Region Top Employing Industries

|                                                                          | Employment<br>2020 | Employment<br>2024 | Net<br>Change | 2020-<br>2024<br>CAGR | 2023<br>Annual<br>Wages |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Manufacturing                                                            | 23,940             | 22,437             | -1,503        | -1.3%                 | \$56,832                |
| Health Care and Social Assistance                                        | 16,404             | 16,309             | -95           | -0.1%                 | \$60,348                |
| Retail Trade                                                             | 12,625             | 14,480             | 1,855         | 2.8%                  | \$37,632                |
| Educational Services                                                     | 10,388             | 10,680             | 292           | 0.6%                  | \$41,964                |
| Accommodation and Food Services                                          | 7,892              | 9,005              | 1,113         | 2.7%                  | \$22,860                |
| Transportation and Warehousing                                           | 5,750              | 7,868              | 2,118         | 6.5%                  | \$55,152                |
| Construction                                                             | 4,345              | 5,235              | 890           | 3.8%                  | \$58,284                |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                         | 3,183              | 4,747              | 1,564         | 8.3%                  | \$73,272                |
| Wholesale Trade                                                          | 4,154              | 4,623              | 469           | 2.2%                  | \$67,716                |
| Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 5,368              | 4,014              | -1,354        | -5.6%                 | \$42,132                |
| Other Services (except Public Administration)                            | 2,668              | 2,997              | 329           | 2.4%                  | \$42,744                |
| Public Administration                                                    | 2,566              | 2,758              | 192           | 1.5%                  | \$39,504                |
| Finance and Insurance                                                    | 2,370              | 2,311              | -59           | -0.5%                 | \$61,272                |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                               | 1,666              | 1,807              | 141           | 1.6%                  | \$46,872                |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises                                  | 1,722              | 1,343              | -379          | -4.9%                 | \$79,920                |
| Information                                                              | 952                | 976                | 24            | 0.5%                  | \$50,472                |
| Utilities                                                                | 840                | 936                | 96            | 2.2%                  | \$77,940                |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                                      | 686                | 849                | 163           | 4.4%                  | \$28,248                |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing                                       | 817                | 776                | -41           | -1.0%                 | \$46,128                |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction                            | 129                | 166                | 37            | 5.2%                  | \$62,136                |

SOURCE: LEHD QWI, 2020-2024 QUARTER 2 DATA, LEHD QWI 2023 ANNUAL AVERAGE FOR WAGES. ALL OWNERSHIP

## LOCATION QUOTIENT

To understand the major industries within a region, an analysis of industry concentration or clustering can be useful. The Location Quotient (LQ) describes the concentration of an industry in a geographic region, in relation to the nation, with 1.0 being the national average. Industries with higher than 1.0 LQ indicate a concentration.

The Southwest Region had higher concentrations in *Food Manufacturing*; *Animal Production and Aquaculture*; *Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing*; *Truck Transportation*; *Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing*; and *Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers*.



## FOOD MANUFACTURING

2024 Southwest Region Location Quotients

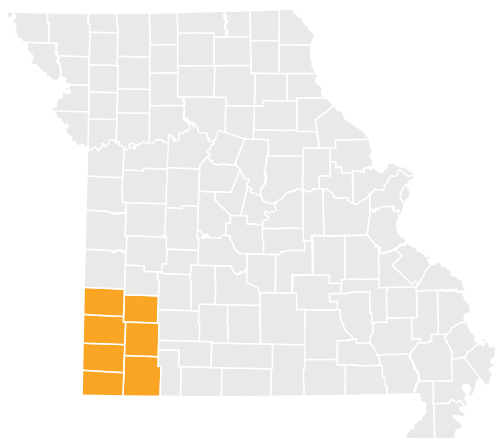
| Industry                                                     | Employment | Location<br>Quotient |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------|
| Food Manufacturing                                           | 7,292      | 5.6                  |
| Animal Production and Aquaculture                            | 1,088      | 5.6                  |
| Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing                  | 1,249      | 5.0                  |
| Truck Transportation                                         | 4,785      | 4.3                  |
| Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing                       | 3,066      | 2.9                  |
| Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers                           | 2,055      | 2.7                  |
| Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component Manufacturing | 791        | 2.6                  |
| General Merchandise Retailers                                | 5,292      | 2.2                  |
| Paper Manufacturing                                          | 572        | 2.2                  |
| Utilities                                                    | 682        | 1.6                  |
| Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers  | 1,552      | 1.5                  |
| Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing                    | 435        | 1.4                  |
| Warehousing and Storage                                      | 1,963      | 1.4                  |
| Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers                              | 1,989      | 1.3                  |

SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, QUARTERLY CENSUS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES 2024

# SOUTHWEST REGION

Projected growth in industry helps to identify future employment needs for an area.

Projections indicate that the largest industry growth in the Southwest Region from 2022-2032 will be in *Hospitals; Food Manufacturing; Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; and Paper Manufacturing.*



## Southwest Largest Growth Industries 2022-2032

|                                                            | Employment<br>2022 | Employment<br>2032 | Change<br>2022-2032<br>Numeric | Change<br>2022-2032<br>Percent |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Hospitals</b>                                           | 6,318              | 7,693              | <b>1,375</b>                   | 21.8%                          |
| <b>Food Manufacturing</b>                                  | 9,091              | 10,016             | <b>925</b>                     | 10.2%                          |
| <b>Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers</b>                     | 2,039              | 2,375              | <b>336</b>                     | 16.5%                          |
| <b>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</b>    | 3,222              | 3,531              | <b>309</b>                     | 9.6%                           |
| <b>Paper Manufacturing</b>                                 | 806                | 1,034              | <b>228</b>                     | 28.3%                          |
| <b>Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals</b> | 3,822              | 4,023              | <b>201</b>                     | 5.3%                           |
| <b>Social Assistance</b>                                   | 2,972              | 3,159              | <b>187</b>                     | 6.3%                           |
| <b>Health and Personal Care Retailers</b>                  | 619                | 772                | <b>153</b>                     | 24.7%                          |
| <b>Utilities</b>                                           | 727                | 873                | <b>146</b>                     | 20.1%                          |
| <b>Total Federal Government Employment</b>                 | 708                | 836                | <b>128</b>                     | 18.1%                          |

SOURCE: MERIC INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS, 2022-2032

PROJECTED GROWTH BY INDUSTRY HELPS TO IDENTIFY FUTURE EMPLOYMENT NEEDS FOR AN AREA.

## OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS

MERIC produces occupational projections that estimates labor demand over a 10-year period. The current projections cycle projected industry and occupation employment from 2022-2032. MERIC categorizes these occupations using its Now-Next-Later method to help job seekers understand the training, education, and experience requirements for various occupations.

**NOW** jobs typically require short-term on-the-job training, little to no experience, and/or a high school diploma. **Now** occupations with the most projected openings are *Stockers and Order Fillers; Cashiers; and Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand.* *Home Health and Personal Care Aides; Light Truck Drivers; and Stockers and Order Fillers* are projected to be the fastest growing **Now** occupations over the next decade.

**NEXT** jobs typically require a non-degree certificate, associate degree, apprenticeship, some experience, or moderate- to long-term training. *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; Cooks, Restaurant; and Nursing Assistants* are projected to have the most openings for the **Next** category of occupations. *Pharmacy Technicians; Cooks, Restaurant; and Food Batchmakers* are the fastest growing **Next** occupations.

**LATER** jobs typically require a bachelor's degree or higher. For **Later** occupations, *General and Operations Managers, Registered Nurses, and Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education* are projected to have the most openings. *Registered Nurses; Accountants and Auditors; and Substitute Teachers, Short-Term* are the fastest growing **Later** occupations.

## Southwest Region Fastest Growing Occupations



SOURCE: MERIC OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS, 2022-2032

NOTE: OCCUPATIONS WITH ANNUAL TOTAL OPENINGS OF LESS THAN 50 ARE OMITTED

★ DENOTES OCCUPATIONS IN THE TOP TEN ONLINE JOB ADS FOR MAY 2023- APRIL 2024 IN THE REGION AND WITHIN THE NOW-NEXT-LATER CLASSIFICATION

# SOUTHWEST REGION

## SOUTHWEST REGION LONG-TERM OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS BY TOP OPENINGS

| OCCUPATION TITLE                                                         |   | 2022<br>Estimated<br>Employment | 2032<br>Projected<br>Employment | Annual<br>Growth<br>Openings | Annual<br>Exits | Annual<br>Transfers | Annual<br>Total<br>Openings | Median<br>Wages |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| NOW OCCUPATIONS                                                          |   |                                 |                                 |                              |                 |                     |                             |                 |
| Stockers and Order Fillers                                               |   | 3,500                           | 3,851                           | 35                           | 229             | 360                 | <b>624</b>                  | \$33,610        |
| Cashiers                                                                 | ★ | 3,457                           | 3,167                           | -29                          | 318             | 321                 | <b>610</b>                  | \$27,536        |
| Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand                   | ★ | 3,224                           | 3,508                           | 28                           | 161             | 274                 | <b>463</b>                  | \$36,072        |
| Retail Salespersons                                                      | ★ | 2,696                           | 2,880                           | 18                           | 183             | 221                 | <b>422</b>                  | \$30,215        |
| Home Health and Personal Care Aides                                      | ★ | 2,204                           | 2,530                           | 33                           | 189             | 158                 | <b>380</b>                  | \$31,239        |
| NEXT OCCUPATIONS                                                         |   |                                 |                                 |                              |                 |                     |                             |                 |
| Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers                                  | ★ | 4,675                           | 4,645                           | -3                           | 211             | 273                 | <b>481</b>                  | \$49,358        |
| Cooks, Restaurant                                                        |   | 1,165                           | 1,394                           | 23                           | 87              | 104                 | <b>214</b>                  | \$29,295        |
| Nursing Assistants                                                       |   | 1,245                           | 1,348                           | 10                           | 82              | 102                 | <b>194</b>                  | \$34,606        |
| Maintenance and Repair Workers, General                                  | ★ | 1,803                           | 1,918                           | 12                           | 82              | 85                  | <b>179</b>                  | \$46,714        |
| First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers           | ★ | 927                             | 967                             | 4                            | 48              | 91                  | <b>143</b>                  | \$34,376        |
| LATER OCCUPATIONS                                                        |   |                                 |                                 |                              |                 |                     |                             |                 |
| General and Operations Managers                                          | ★ | 3,994                           | 4,136                           | 14                           | 101             | 218                 | <b>333</b>                  | \$58,323        |
| Registered Nurses                                                        | ★ | 3,089                           | 3,607                           | 52                           | 111             | 69                  | <b>232</b>                  | \$72,005        |
| Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education                     |   | 1,500                           | 1,562                           | 6                            | 51              | 50                  | <b>107</b>                  | \$47,114        |
| Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education |   | 1,249                           | 1,303                           | 5                            | 37              | 41                  | <b>83</b>                   | \$53,052        |
| Accountants and Auditors                                                 |   | 663                             | 707                             | 4                            | 21              | 31                  | <b>56</b>                   | \$65,069        |

SOURCE: MERIC OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS, 2022-2032

★ DENOTES OCCUPATIONS IN THE TOP TEN ONLINE JOB ADS FOR MAY 2023- APRIL 2024 IN THE REGION AND WITHIN THE NOW-NEXT-LATER CLASSIFICATION

## ONLINE JOB POSTINGS

Job postings are an indicator of demand and opportunities in an area and can assist individuals seeking job opportunities in current in-demand occupations. According to information based on online job posting data collected and aggregated from May 1, 2024 to April 30, 2025 by Lightcast™ for the Southwest Region, jobs like *Registered Nurses*; *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers*; and *Retail Salespersons* had a high number of job postings in the region.

| OCCUPATION TITLE                                       | ONLINE JOB POSTINGS |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| NOW OCCUPATIONS                                        |                     |
| Retail Salespersons                                    | 530                 |
| Home Health and Personal Care Aides                    | 300                 |
| Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers             | 290                 |
| Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand | 250                 |
| Cashiers                                               | 220                 |
| NEXT OCCUPATIONS                                       |                     |
| Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers                | 760                 |
| First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers         | 430                 |
| Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses      | 320                 |
| Production Workers, All Other                          | 300                 |
| Maintenance and Repair Workers, General                | 270                 |
| LATER OCCUPATIONS                                      |                     |
| Registered Nurses                                      | 1,290               |
| Physical Therapists                                    | 260                 |
| Physicians, All Other                                  | 250                 |
| Nurse Practitioners                                    | 160                 |
| Medical and Health Services Managers                   | 140                 |

SOURCE: LIGHTCAST™, ONLINE JOB ADS FROM MAY 1, 2024 - APRIL 30, 2025